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**Evan T. Jones (ed.), ‘A Book of Articles to prevent or detect frauds in the Customs, 1572’ (University of Bristol, ROSE, 2011)<sup>1</sup>**

This ‘Book of Articles’ is one of a number of similar documents submitted to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, following his appointment as Lord Treasurer of England in July 1572.<sup>2</sup> The book represents an ostensibly disinterested attempt to identify problems in the customs service, particularly at London, and propose ways in which fraud and the evasion of customs could be curtailed. While the document is undated and bears no name, an endorsement on the cover notes that ‘quaere [it is a question] if this be not Carmarthen’s device’. This suggests that the Lord Treasurer, or one of his secretaries, suspected the author of the ‘Articles’ was Richard Camarden. Such an attribution is plausible, given that Camarden submitted a number of documents of this nature to Burghley, the Queen, and others during the 1570s-80s – the best known of which is his ‘Caveat to the Queen’.<sup>3</sup> That the ‘Articles’ were written shortly after Burghley became Lord Treasurer is apparent from the disparaging references to the increased corruption that had allegedly occurred during the last years of William Paulet’s tenure as Lord Treasurer.<sup>4</sup> In particular the ‘Articles’ note that customs officers had developed many bad practices because they ‘of late years have had such liberty under the last lord Treasurer deceased’.<sup>5</sup> It is further suggested that the officers now kept great state, rarely going to the customs houses themselves ‘till now your honour came to be Lord Treasurer.’

The tone and broad conclusions of the ‘Articles’ are analogous to Camarden’s ‘Caveat to the Queen’. In particular, the document claims that customs evasion was occurring on a large scale in both London and the outports and that this was only possible because of the thoroughly corrupt nature of the customs service itself. The analysis of the problems of the service and the proposals made for their rectification are not identical to those of the ‘Caveat’, however. It is for this reason that the ‘Articles’ are reproduced below in full.

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<sup>1</sup> British Library [BL], Lansdowne 110, no. 40, fols. 117-25. The following conventions were employed when transcribing the document: the line spacing, spelling, capitalization, underlining, deletions and punctuation follow the manuscript; reconstructions of suspensions are in italics. Squared brackets indicate editorial additions. Erasures, which are noted, appear to have been performed by the scribe and seem to represent corrections of transcription errors. I would like to thank Margaret Condon (University of Bristol) both for proof reading the final text and for her suggestions in relation to it.

<sup>2</sup> Other examples include: BL, Lansdowne 14, no. 41 fol. 100r.; Lansdowne no. 110, no. 48 fols. 148-51; no. 74 fols. 206-7; The National Archives: Public Record Office [TNA:PRO], SP12/151, no. 6.

<sup>3</sup> John U. Nef, ‘Richard Camarden’s “A Caveat for the Quene” (1570), *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 41/1 (1933), pp. 33-57. See also: H. A. Lloyd, ‘Camden Carmarden and the Customs’, *English Historical Review*, vol. 85 (1970), pp. 776-87.

<sup>4</sup> William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester, died 10 March 1572, aged 97. He had served as Lord Treasurer since 1550 but had lived in semi-retirement at Basing House since 1570. Winchester is known to have exercised poor financial control over his office during his last years: L. L. Ford, ‘Paulet, William, first marquess of Winchester (1474/5?–1572)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> See below: fol. 119r.

[Cover]

‘Articles for reformation of  
abuses in payment of Custom’

[Endorsed in another hand]

‘quere<sup>6</sup> if this bee not Car-  
marthens devise.’

117r.

Articles For Reformation of the disceites<sup>7</sup> used in the paiment  
of the Quenes Majesties Revenewes of Custom Subsidy and  
Impost<sup>8</sup> and likewise to reforme the disorders used by the  
officers marchantes shippars & others by whome her *majestie*  
ys deceyved

And Firste a Reformacyon for the  
officers belonginge to the Custom

The chieffe grounde & helpe to reforme all the abuses &  
disceites that be used to disceive the Quenes *Majestie* of her custome  
Subsidie Imposte & other *Rightes* & dewties muste be to enlarge  
the Custome howse & the wharffe according to the platte or  
Forme<sup>9</sup> that George Nedham devised longe since<sup>10</sup> *which* was that  
there mighte be sufficient place provided at the Custome howse  
that all gooddes eyther goinge owte or comynge into this Porte  
of London mighte be laden & unladen at the Custome Howse  
in the sighte & presence of all her *Majesties* officers and other  
Bystanders and that marchantes & officers shoulde be no  
Longer suffred to Lade & unlade goodes at so many sundrie  
blinde keys & plattes<sup>11</sup> as ys nowe *permitted* wheare marchantes  
aswell Strangers<sup>12</sup> as Englishe have dwellinge howses &  
warehouses wheare bothe the officers the marchantes and

<sup>6</sup> ‘quere’: quaere – i.e. one may ask / it is a question.

<sup>7</sup> ‘disceites’: deceits.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Custom Subsidy and Impost’: these are different forms of national duty levied on merchandise entering or leaving the country. Custom and subsidy are of ancient origin, the impost on cloth and wine had been levied since 1558.

<sup>9</sup> ‘platte or Forme’: plat or form – i.e. plan or scheme, usually indicating a map, plan, or graphic representation.

<sup>10</sup> In 1571 George Needham submitted a plan to William Cecil, then Secretary of State, for the enlargement of the official quays in London. As Needham noted at that time, he had long been advocating reforms along the lines suggested: BL, Lansdowne 110, no. 39 fol. 115.

<sup>11</sup> ‘blinde keys & plattes’: blind quays and plats – i.e. obscure or concealed quays and landing stages.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Strangers’ – i.e. alien merchants.

key kepars<sup>13</sup> use their disceites & both day & nighte tyme  
 may doe what they will, so that this one pointe beinge  
 Reformed all the reste of goodd orders & iuste<sup>14</sup> dealinge will  
 quietlie & orderlie followe /

117v.

And Firste for reformacyon of officers  
 & their Clarkes /<sup>15</sup>

The head officers & their  
 clarkes to be bounden to  
 observe owres & geove  
 attendaunce in the custome  
 house.

Firste that the Customers Comptrowlers & their Clarkes may  
 be commaunded to be at the Customehowse & give attendaunce to  
 receive the Quenes *Majesties* dewties & to serve the marchantes &  
 shippars bothe before noone & after accordinge to the owres<sup>16</sup>  
 appointed for the same uppon some paine or punishment to  
 be provided therefore<sup>17</sup>

That no entrie of goodes  
 be made in any place  
 but in customehouse  
 onely

That no Entrie<sup>18</sup> of marchantes goodes neyther goinge owte  
 nor cominge in be made or taken in any place but in the  
 Customehowse onelye and at such tymes as both the Customers  
 & Comptrowlers or their sufficient or Deputies shalbe  
 present and immediatlie enter the same in their bookes  
 accordinge to the order of those billes of Entrie delivered to your  
 honour<sup>19</sup> uppon some paine to be provided For the same

<sup>13</sup> 'key kepars': quay keepers.

<sup>14</sup> 'iuste': just.

<sup>15</sup> The head officers of a port were the 'customers', 'controllers', 'searchers' and 'tide-waiters', all of whom were appointed by the Lord Treasurer by Letters Patent. A customer was responsible for assessing the customs dues payable on merchandise and, if the customs had not been farmed, collecting the duty. The controller was meant to work alongside the customer, taking an independent record of goods declared, as a check on frauds that might be perpetrated by the customer. The searcher was responsible for supervising the loading and unloading of ships, making sure that each merchant's customs entry tallied with what was actually on board. The searcher also had overall responsibility for preventing goods being illicitly put on board vessels or taken off them without having been declared. The tide-waiters of London were responsible for accompanying ships going up or down the River Thames to London and for supervising any merchandise that had been laded on a lighter for movement up the river, prior to declaration. All these officers commonly had deputies and clerks who worked under them.

<sup>16</sup> 'owres'; hours.

<sup>17</sup> An Act of Parliament of 1559 had specified the hours at which goods could be loaded or unloaded from ships and ordered that this should only happen at officially appointed quays: 'An Acte limiting the tymes for laying on Lande Merchandise from beyonde the Seas, and touching Customes for Sweete Wynes,' *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 4, pp. 372-4. The growth in traffic at London, however, meant that the official quays were insufficient to accommodate all merchandise.

<sup>18</sup> 'Entrie': entry – i.e. declaration for customs purposes.

<sup>19</sup> According to the 'Book of Orders' issued to all customs officers in 1565, entries were to be entered immediately in the 'original books' (i.e. port books, TNA:PRO, E190) issued by the Exchequer. These original books were then to be submitted to the Exchequer at the end of each half year: B.Y., *A Sure Guide to Merchants, Custom-House Officers, &c. or the Modern Practice of the Court of Exchequer; in Prosecutions Relating to His Majesty's Revenue of the Customs. ... By an Officer of the Customs.* (London, 1730), pp. 411-12. The author of the 'Articles' thus appears to be

no warrant<sup>es</sup> Billes nor  
other writing<sup>es</sup> be made  
sealed or delivered but  
in the customehowse  
onlye.

That no warrant<sup>es</sup> billes Cockettes Certificatt<sup>es</sup><sup>20</sup> or other  
writing<sup>es</sup> apperteninge to cutome be made sealed or delivered  
in any place but in the Customehowse only in the presens  
of the officers

waiters & serchers to  
have their offices uppon  
the customehousekey &  
be bounden to geove  
attendaunce of the  
merchantes at the owres  
appointed.

That ii convenient places may be appointed uppon the  
new Customehowse key where both waiters & Serchers at  
either Ende of the same wharffe may have their severall  
offices by the owtewarde & Inwarde Customehowse as dothe  
appeare in Nedhams platt & there to give their attendaunce  
both before noone & after noone to see the Ladinge and  
unladinge of the marchantes gooddes & resceive their billes

118r.

Cockettes & other writing<sup>es</sup> & be bounden to observe the owres  
appointed uppon some paine

the buildinge of the  
new wharffe will  
cut of superfluous  
officers.

The new wharffe beinge made & the headd officers placed  
uppon the same as ys appointed in the said Platt and the  
owres of gevinge attendaunce observed by the officers & their  
Clarkes as ys declared where as now there be v under

to many officers be  
unprofitable

Serchers<sup>21</sup> beside Master Grey,<sup>22</sup> ii Serchers with Master Grey will  
serve, & of xvi weyters, vi wilbe sufficient For these  
ii kindes of under officers be verie hurtefull & do moste  
maintaine them selves by deceyvinge the Quenes majestie and  
speciallie the weyters takinge charge of gooddes Inwarde  
who having but iiij<sup>li</sup> standinge wages & all the rest of  
their Fees & proffettes that they can honestlie or justly  
have ys not worthe paste x or xii<sup>li</sup> a yere more<sup>23</sup> to every  
mans share which ys not able nor can mainteyne suche

of small Fees greate  
houses kepte.

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pressing for a 'reform' that was, in theory, already an official practice. The implication is that officers were continuing their old practice of taking entries in rough books and only entering the consignment in the official book at a later stage.

<sup>20</sup> 'warrant<sup>es</sup> billes Cockettes Certificatt<sup>es</sup>': warrants, bills, cockets, certificates. These were different types of official document issued by customs officers to authorise certain actions (e.g. the movement of goods), or to declare that duties had been paid on a consignment.

<sup>21</sup> 'v under Serchers': five under-searchers – i.e. deputy searchers.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Grey, searcher of London.

<sup>23</sup> The annual salary of a tide-waiter was £4 at London, albeit, as noted here, the a waiter could expect to earn another £10-12 per year in official fees for performing his duties.

under officers do most deceive the quene.

officers wilbe ageinst buildinge the custome house:

And will reise exclamations

118v.

because they woulde have all goodes to be laden & unladen in corners.

& make billes & other writings at their howses & not in the customehouse.

& geove<sup>28</sup> no attendaunce in the customehouse but deale frowardly.

to maytaine their olde disordered libertie

but beinge compelled to kepe orders.

the customehouse being builded

they shall do more service in one day then they can do now in ij dayes

chargeable houses & portes<sup>24</sup> as diverse of them do kepe And trewlie my lorde to saie uprightlie the greatest disceyte & damage that ys or hath bene done to her majestie ys by the consent & procurement of her highness officers to the Custome howse belonginge

Your honor shall Finde that diverse of thofficers & specially the waiters Serchers customers Clarkes & key kepars will reipine & with all pollecyes & subtile meanes they can by Exclamacions of keykepars wharfengers<sup>25</sup> lightermen<sup>26</sup> & shippars seeke to hinder the enlarginge & makinge of the Customehowse<sup>27</sup> by reason they would still have all

things at libertie to be Laden & unladen in Corners & to have the Entrie of gooddes & makinge of billes Cockettes & other writings at home in their howses & not to observe the owres appointed before noone & after noone to give attendaunce of merchantes at the Custome howse but will Finde excuses & purposely deale frowardly & stowtie<sup>29</sup> to maintaine their olde disordered libertie,<sup>30</sup> oneles<sup>31</sup> by some Forcible meanes as losse of offices or other like punishment as heare after shall follow they may be compelled to do their dewties: For the Customeshouse beinge enlarged & vi new Cranes buylded & theofficers forced to geove attendaunce in the Custome howse from our Ladies day<sup>32</sup> till michaelmas<sup>33</sup> from vij of the clocke in the morninge till xj & at after noone from ii till v. And From michelmas till our Ladies day from ix in the morninge till xj & at

<sup>24</sup> 'chargeable houses & portes' – i.e. expensive homes and lifestyle.

<sup>25</sup> 'wharfengers': wharfingers – the owners or keepers of wharfs.

<sup>26</sup> 'lightermen': the owners of the small river vessels that carried goods from great ships to London's quays.

<sup>27</sup> In other words the author warns the Lord Treasurer that the affected officials will do everything they can to prevent the enlargement of the official quays and customs house.

<sup>28</sup> 'geove': give.

<sup>29</sup> 'Frowardly & stowtie' – i.e. they will be obstructive and create difficulties.

<sup>30</sup> 'disordered libertie' – i.e. not subject to proper control.

<sup>31</sup> 'oneles': unless.

<sup>32</sup> 'our Ladies day': Lady Day, 25 March.

<sup>33</sup> 'michaelmas': 29 September.

Bookes of the rates of the  
custome to ly open  
in the customehowse

after noone from ii till iiij, they may quietly dispatche  
more *merchantes* & their gooddes in one day then they can  
do now in ij  
Theare ys one thinge my Lorde the doinge therof woulde  
not onely be great honour to the Quenes *majestie* but great  
Equitie quietnes & contentacion<sup>34</sup> to the marchantes both  
Englishe & straungers & specially in this tyme that her  
*majestie* letteth her custome to Farme<sup>35</sup> *which* ys that bookes  
faire written in parchment mighte not onely be appointed  
in both the custome howses Inwarde & owtewarde to ly<sup>36</sup> open to  
all men as the Bible doth in the Churche wherein shoulde

119r.

the like bookes to be  
put in prynte.

be written the juste Rates of all dewties that *merchantes*  
both englishe & straungers owghte to pay to her *majestie* both  
Inwarde & owtewarde but also that her *majestie* woulde  
further permitt the same bookes iustly to be sett forth in  
Printe<sup>37</sup> that all people might certainly know what  
dewties they owght to pay For every kynde of merchandises  
both inwarde & owtwarde & not to stande to the discrecyon &  
Curtesie<sup>38</sup> & speciallie their clarkes who kepe  
the Rates privately to them selves alledginge the bookes  
now in Prynte be false & uncertein & the *merchantes* muste  
stande to their written bookes & thus deale *with* men as yt

<sup>34</sup> 'Equitie quietnes & contentacion': equity, quietness and contentation. The sense is that merchants will be more peaceable and satisfied with their lot if treated in a fair and even-handed manner.

<sup>35</sup> Since 1570 the collection of customs at London, Sandwich, Chichester, Southampton, Ipswich and Woodbridge had been farmed out to Thomas Smythe, collector of petty custom in London: Arthur P. Newton, 'The establishment of the Great Farm of the English customs', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 1 (1918), p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> 'ly': lie.

<sup>37</sup> In 1558 the Crown had created a nationally-applicable 'Book of Rates', which laid out the official valuation of goods paying poundage and of the duties to which other goods were subject: Thomas S. Willan (ed.), *A Tudor Book of Rates* (1582), (Manchester edition, 1962), p. xxvi. While the book of rates was originally circulated to the ports in manuscript form, a printed version was produced in 1562. The 'Articles' suggest, however, that the printed version was not widely circulated, or was not made available for consultation by the customers – hence the plea that parchment copies should be made available now and that, in the longer term, a new printed version should be published, so that merchants could see what they were liable to pay on any given item.

<sup>38</sup> 'not to stande to the discrecyon & Curtesie of thofficers' – i.e. not to be dependent on the will or favour of the customs officers.

pleaseth them<sup>39</sup> & specially for goodes inwarde where many  
 merchantes be abused & dare not complaine by reason they  
 have nothinge to show for them selffes  
 The Customers Comptrowlers & all other officers *pertayninge*  
 to custome throwhowte this Realme of Late yeares have  
 hade such libertie under the laste lord Treasurer decased<sup>40</sup>  
 that in maner they did what they would *withowte* having  
 Comptrowllment<sup>41</sup> & therby growinge such marveyulous  
 great wellth, that never anye officers that served  
 before them in those places weare any thinge  
 Comparable to them, And beinge so Riche have taken  
 uppon them & kepte such greate state that till now  
 your honor came to be Lorde Treasurer the head officers  
 them selffes in maner thought skorne & selldome  
 came to the Custome howse but toke their pleasure  
 119v.  
 & followed their owne private busines appointinge  
 a numbre of Clarkes to serve & take the charge under  
 them who rulinge all thinges as hit pleased them be  
 in like maner growen so Riche that some of them have  
 Clarkes under theme again *which* under Clarkes havinge  
 Little wages to mayntaine them selves exacte in  
 reysinge of new dewties of Entries of shippes<sup>42</sup> in makinge  
 billes Certificattes Cockettes & other wrytinges For  
 merchantes & shippers & are become so stowte<sup>43</sup> that often  
 tymes they abuse honeste men bothe in wordes & deeddes  
 nor will not give such attendaunce in the Custome howse  
 as they owghtt & often tymes will not be fownde but delay  
 the merchantes & shippers From day to day for Cockettes

officers by sufferance  
 forgett thier dewties

waxe mervelous  
 riche:

thinke skorne to doe  
 theyr dewties

followe their private  
 busynes

appointe clarkes under  
 them.

havinge litle wages  
 exacte dubble & treble  
 of merchantes & shippers

misuse them.

deley them from day  
 to day:

<sup>39</sup> The author of the 'Articles' suggests that the customs officers were claiming that the printed books were invalid. The officers were thus forcing merchants to pay duties according to their own rates.

<sup>40</sup> William Paulet, Marques of Winchester (d. 1572).

<sup>41</sup> 'withowte having Comptrowllment': without having controlment – i.e. not being subject to proper regulation or accounting controls.

<sup>42</sup> While the head officers received formal salaries, their underlings did not. It is alleged that the clerks were making a living by in part by raising the duties payable by merchants.

<sup>43</sup> 'stowte': stout – in this sense 'arrogant'.



billes Certificattes & other writinges, causinge them to  
 Runne from one officers howse to an other<sup>44</sup> *which* beinge Farre  
 a Sundar<sup>45</sup> & the clerkes seldome at home & specially  
 at after noone, *the* Shippers often tymes by losinge of  
 One [*erasure*] tyde when *the* winde ys Fayre their  
 voyages be hindred iij or iiij monthes to their great  
 Losse & hindraunce & in the ende to be dispatched they  
 must give somthinge to the Clerkes or offycers or  
 ells some Fayned deleys<sup>46</sup> be fownde to stay them by  
 this meanes the clerkes have reysed new charges  
 uppon the *merchantes* & shippers dubble & treble of  
 that the ought to take or weare woonte to have<sup>47</sup>  
 These new exactions deleys if yt please your  
  
*120r.*  
 to the great grieve  
 of *merchantes* and  
 Shippers  
  
 honor are more grevous to the *merchantes* & Shippers then  
 the paiment of their Custome subsidy & Imposte for havinge  
 iustly paied<sup>48</sup> & done their dewties to the Quene they thinke  
 they deserve & ought to [*erasure*] be well used & under your  
 honours Correction these abuses be so profitable to thofficers  
 & their Clarkes that in my opinion they will hardely  
 be redressed *withouwte* some severe order to compell them  
 For the doinge whereof if hit shall like *your honour* me  
 thinke hit weare goodd that ij tables<sup>50</sup> should be hanged

<sup>44</sup> It is suggested that if merchants were not willing to pay what today would be called 'facilitation payments', the clerks would delay their paperwork and force merchants to run from one officer's house to another.

<sup>45</sup> 'Farre a Sundar': far asunder.

<sup>46</sup> 'Fayned deleys': feigned delays.

<sup>47</sup> 'weare woonte to have': were wont to have.

<sup>48</sup> 'iustly paied': justly paid.

<sup>49</sup> 'be holpen' – i.e. be remedied.

<sup>50</sup> 'tables' – i.e. noticeboards.

ij tables to be sett  
open in the custome  
house what dewties  
the officers & clerkes  
ought to take of the  
merchantes & shippers.

upp in eyther Customehouse wherein should be [erasure]  
writen both the owres & tymes that thofficers owght  
to give their Attendaunce & what dewties or [erasure]  
Fees they owght to take of merchantes & Shippars for  
everie kynde of writinge or other thinge perteyninge  
to their office & not to exceede that ys appointedd  
uppon some such paine as *your* honor shall thinke  
good /

[erasure]

In all places beyond  
the seas the costumers  
& officers dwell at  
the customehouse.

In all places beyond the seas where princes doe  
appointe the resceit<sup>51</sup> of their customes they make  
houses in the same place for thofficers to dwell uppon  
to thentent they shalbe continually *present* not onely  
to receive their dewties of the merchantes but to see the  
merchantes & Shippars do their dewtie & that beinge done  
they may be well used & dispatched & trewly under  
*your* honours Correccion yt weare goodd (if you determine  
that the custom howse shalbe enlarged) yt will quite

120v.

if hit weare so heare it  
woulde dubble & treble  
quite the charges of  
buildinge to ~~her~~ the  
quene.

the coste dubble & trebble<sup>52</sup> to her *majestie* if all the heade  
officers mighte dwell & be placed theare or if *your*  
honours will not place all the head officers at the leaste  
both the Comptrowlers of the Inward and owtwarde  
custome might have their dwellinge howses theare uppon  
the same wharffe for the surer service of her *majestie* &  
the better expedicion<sup>53</sup> contentacion & quyetnes of the  
merchantes & shippars, For as thofficers now dwell  
ys both unorderedlie & troblesome bothe to themselves  
& others

as the officers dwell  
nowe ys both unprofit=  
able & unorderedlye.

A general reformation for  
all officers belonginge  
to custome as well att  
all other portes in this  
Realme as att

And further my lorde under *your* honours correccion I am  
so bowlde to show my opinion for a general reformation

<sup>51</sup> 'resceit': receipt.

<sup>52</sup> 'quite the coste dubble and trebble': quit the cost double and treble – i.e. repay the cost of the proposed reform two or three times over.

<sup>53</sup> 'better expedicion': better expedition – i.e. the speedy execution of affairs.

London  
 beinge to many at diverse  
 Portes  
 And by sufferaunce are  
 become Riche:  
 Careles of their dew=  
 tie to the quene.  
 private to them  
 selffes.

concerninge the officers belonginge to the custom house  
 who as they be in all sortes to many in number &  
 specially here in London As by mowth<sup>54</sup> (if it be  
 your honors pleasure) I shall shoue you further  
 so not only in London but [*erasure*] throwghowte all  
 Englande as ys declared by the sufferaunce of the  
 Late lorde Treasurer deceased they be come so  
 Riche & Careless bothe of their service & dewtie  
 to the Quenes Majesties ~~highnes~~ & so privat to them  
 selffes<sup>55</sup> that withoute some sharpe & severe order they  
 will not be reformed & till suche ~~order~~ reformation be done  
 upon them certainly her majestie shall never be well  
 served & to say the verie truth my lorde many of the  
 Quenes officers them selves be the procurers of the

121r.

& procurers to deceive  
 the quene & specially  
 in the cuntrey:  
 wheare the quenes dewties  
 ys skarcely halfe  
 paid & no mervaille  
 for offices be sould for  
 marvellous sommes of  
 money:  
 wise men marvell howe  
 the byars can honestly  
 get their money  
 againe

merchantes<sup>56</sup> to deceive her majestie & be partakers of the spoile  
 & speciallie in the Cuntre<sup>57</sup> where thofficers havinge no  
 man to loke unto them her highnes ys skarcely halffe  
 answered<sup>58</sup> her Rightes & dewties & no marvaile for of all  
 theofficers in this Realme belonginge to Custome and  
 specially for headd officers ther ys not vj persons, but  
 they have bought their offices<sup>59</sup> some once some twice,<sup>60</sup> at  
 such height & unreasonable prises as ys marvell to all  
 men how of so small wages or of other dewties lawfully

<sup>54</sup> 'by mowth': by mouth – i.e. in person. This is thus an offer by the author of the 'Articles' to meet with Burghley.

<sup>55</sup> 'privat to them selffes': private to themselves – i.e. secretive in their dealings.

<sup>56</sup> 'be the procurers of the merchantes' – i.e. it is claimed that the customs officers offer to help to merchants to evade duties, rather than it being the merchants who seek to bribe officers.

<sup>57</sup> 'the Cuntre': the country – i.e. beyond London.

<sup>58</sup> 'skarcely halffe answered': scarcely half answered – i.e. the Queen gets barely half what she is due.

<sup>59</sup> Offices, including those held by letters patent, could be sold by the incumbent to another party, provided the Lord Treasurer could be persuaded to allow the 'resignation'. Where a post fell vacant (e.g. following the sudden death of the incumbent) the Lord Treasurer could sell the post to his sole benefit. For examples of such practices, as performed by Lord Burghley and his son during the 1590s, see: Evan T. Jones, (ed.), 'William Walton's Suit for the Searchership of Bristol, July 1597' (University of Bristol, ROSE, 2010). <<http://hdl.handle.net/1983/1697>>; idem., 'The Suit to Obtain the Position of Customer Inwards at Bristol for John Dowle, May 1593' (University of Bristol, ROSE, 2011) <<http://hdl.handle.net/1983/1704>>; idem., 'The Suit to Obtain the Position of Customer of Bridgwater for William Benger, 1596' (University of Bristol, ROSE, 2011) <<http://hdl.handle.net/1983/1705>>.

<sup>60</sup> Given that offices held by patent were typically held for life, it might seem strange that the author claims that some officers had been made to pay 'twice' for their office. Additional payments might be required, on the other hand, if an officer had been found guilty of an infraction that could have resulted in his dismissal.

but eyther to deceive  
 the prince or merchant  
 the merchant will not  
 pay more then his  
 dewtie  
 So the losse lightes  
 uppon the prince  
 to reforme this disor=  
 der  
 All officers belongynge  
 to custome.  
 once a yeare to apper=  
 in the checker.  
 openly to answer all  
 thinges objected  
 ageinst them.

belonginge to them the can Justly or honestly reyse &  
 gett those great sommes Ageine & become so riche but  
 eyther to do wronge to the Prince<sup>61</sup> or the subiectes & the merchantes  
 And subiectes will not lightly take wronge or pay  
 more then their dewties So that this losse & damage  
 lightes allwayes uppon her majestie by meanes of her  
 owne officers for reformation whereof my opinion ys  
 that no officer belonginge to custom should have any  
 Patent or assurance of his office but from yeare to  
 yeare<sup>62</sup> & at every yeares Ende at some certen day  
 appointed in the Terme tyme to make them the [erasure]  
 better to know them selves & do their dewties both  
 to her majestie & merchantes they should all appeare in  
 the Exchequer<sup>63</sup> before the lorde treasurer the Chauncelor<sup>64</sup>  
 the Barons<sup>65</sup> & other head officers of that Court for the  
 tyme beinge & these openly to stande & answer  
 to all men for any wronge that may be objected

121v.

aswell by the prince as  
 the merchantes & subiectes  
 as they shalbe tried eyther  
 to continew in their  
 office or ells displaced.  
 in some place of Jar=  
 manye<sup>67</sup> if the customers  
 deceive the princes  
 they be hanged as  
 fellows.

ageinst [erasure] them eyther on her Majesties ~ ~ ~ behalffe  
 or on the merchantes & shippars as well Englishe as  
 strangers & theare as their service & doinges shalbe  
 founde & tried eyther to be remitted<sup>66</sup> for one yeare  
 Longer in to their offices or ells punished or dismissed  
 if they deserve as that honorable Cowrte shall  
 see cause. By this order thofficers specialle  
 they of the Cuntry wilbe bridlede & be in Feare  
 that every man will seeke to entise them to do  
 evell to thentent at the day Appointed of their  
 answearinge in the checker to accuse them thus eyther

<sup>61</sup> 'the Prince' – i.e. the Queen.

<sup>62</sup> It is suggested that rather than appointing officers for life, officers should only be appointed for one year at a time.

<sup>63</sup> 'the Exchequer': the Exchequer – the body responsible for the collection of royal revenues.

<sup>64</sup> 'the Chauncelor': the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

<sup>65</sup> 'the Barons': the judges of the Court of Exchequer, who dealt with cases concerning the payment, or non payment, of duties.

<sup>66</sup> 'remitted' – i.e. restored or returned.

<sup>67</sup> 'Jarmany' – i.e. Germany.

for Feare of loss of their office or the open shame  
or punishment they shall recieve in that honorable  
presence if they do offende they wilbe more ready  
& Carefull to do their dewties both to her *majestie* &  
*merchantes*<sup>68</sup>

An evill & perillous  
example.

There be many (my Lorde) that do mistake & thinke  
hit daungerous that *Master Birde* beinge chiefe officer  
for the Resceit of her maiesties dewties owtwarde that  
*William Revet* beinge his brother in Lawe shoulde be  
suffered to be his Comptrowler<sup>69</sup> for they ij agreinge<sup>70</sup>  
may do muche harme diverse weys

the quene deceived by  
transportinge foren  
commodityes owt of  
this realme /

Whereas often tymes forren commodityes comminge into  
this Realme not beinge in Reyquest<sup>71</sup> but more worth  
in other Cuntries the bringers thereof into this  
Realme be he Englishe or Straungers havinge once

122r.

paid her *majesties* *Rightes* & dewties belonginge to the same havinge  
still the *propertie* of the same gooddes in him mey lawfullie at  
his pleasure shipppe them away by Certificatt to any foren  
Region *without* any other dewtie payinge to her *majestie* but  
the same gooddes beinge once solde from him to any other  
person the *propertie* therof ys changed & if the person that bought the  
same commodities heare in Englande be disposed to transporte  
them owte of this Realme agerin he moste pay her *majestie* so  
muche dewtie as doth aperteine to englishe or straungers<sup>72</sup> in

<sup>68</sup> The argument is thus that officers will fear those that try to bribe them, knowing that they might later accuse them of corrupt practice before the Exchequer Court.

<sup>69</sup> William Byrd, was collector of petty-custom outwards. He was the brother-in-law to William Rivett, controller of the petty-custom: Oliver Dunn, 'London's Merchant-Smugglers, 'Concealments' in the Customs Books, and the Reaction of Elizabethan Government' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> 'agreinge': agreeing. Since the controller was meant to keep an independent record of the goods passing through the port, frauds perpetrated by the customer would only be possible if the customer and controller colluded to make sure that their accounts agreed. It is suggested that the family relationship between Byrd and Rivett made this more likely.

<sup>71</sup> 'in Reyquest': in request – i.e. in demand.

<sup>72</sup> In other words, if a merchant imported goods and then re-exported them because he could not find a buyer in England, he was not required to pay duty on the outbound cargo. However, if the goods were sold to another person, who then exported them, the goods *were* liable to pay duty. To avoid the payment of double duty, goods that had been sold and then re-exported were commonly dispatched under the name of the original owner.

the maner of the  
deciete:

this case her *majestie* ys greatly deceyved For hit ys  
commen use amongeste the *merchantes* that by suche goodes in  
Englande myndinge to transport the same owte of this  
Realme agein to condicion *with* the *merchantes* that first brought  
in the same to enter yt owtewarde in the Customeshowse  
in his owne name only to deceive her *majestie* of such *Rightes*  
& dewties as the last byar owght to pay For remedy wherof  
yt weare goodd *that every merchant that* transporteth such gooddes  
alledginge the *propertie* therof still to remaine in him selve  
should make his bill of Entrie as for gooddes owtwarde &  
put in these woordes followinge & be sworne to them. I T.B.<sup>73</sup>  
*merc*er of London desire licence of the Quenes *majestie* to  
transport these forren commodities to Hamborow brought by  
me from Rochell into this Realme in such a shippe *master* such  
a man such a yeare such a moneth & such a day & paide  
her *majestie* dewties belonginge to the same all *which* goodes  
I take myne othe to be the very same I firste brought into

122v.

beinge holpen it will  
save the quene ij<sup>M</sup> markes  
at least yearlie.

this Realme & never solde them but all the same goodes do still  
remaine & belonge unto me as when I entred them firste  
nor *that* I do not transporte the same commodites by any colorable  
meanes to the use of any other person to thentent to deceive her  
*majestie* of her *Rightes* & dewties In wytnes wherof etc. this  
order beinge observed I dare say will *profytt* the quenes *majestie*  
ij thousande markes<sup>74</sup> yearly at leaste

no gooddes entred att  
sight shall go from the  
customeshowse till yt  
be sene & entred in the  
bookes

That no gooddes entredd at sight<sup>75</sup> shalbe conveyed to any  
of thofficers or *merchantes* howses to be opened & sene, but  
streight wey taken upp & put into the quenes storehowse  
appointed for that purpose & there no longer to be kept

<sup>73</sup> 'T.B.' The initials are included merely as a placeholder name, probably standing for 'Thomas Brown' in the suggested formula for the oath.

<sup>74</sup> 'ij thousande markes': 2,000 Marks – i.e. £1,333 13s. 4d.

<sup>75</sup> 'entredd at sight' – i.e. entered using a Bill of Sight. This was a declaration by the merchant of what was *believed* to be in a consignment, in those cases where precise information was lacking. The use of Bills of Sight was common because a merchant might not know, until a consignment was inspected, whether some of the goods laded had been damaged or lost on route – e.g. due to 'ullage' (leakage) of liquid cargoes from their barrels.

then the head officers to rise & the owres appointed before  
noone & after noone at *which* tyme *without* further deley the  
same gooddes to be opened & sene by the Customer Comptrowler  
& Surveyor or by ij of them at the least or their deputies  
havinge *with* them ij weyters & uppon sight of the same  
gooddes the merchante streight wayes to make his bill of  
Entrie as ys appointed & deliver hit subscribed to the  
Customer & he streight wey to enter the same into his booke  
as other billes be

order for all maner  
gooddes shipped owtwarde  
by certificat

That no cloth nor other Englishe or Forren commodityes  
beinge so packte or made upp wherein disceyt may be used  
beinge once entred uppon any shipp to be transported  
owtwarde & can not be taken into the same shippe (as  
verie often tymes yt so happneth) but after by certificatt  
must be laden uppon som other shippe that no such clothe

123r.

nor other gooddes whatsoever beinge so packt as above said be  
suffred to be caried to the *merchantes* howse but streight  
ways to be put into the quenes storehouse appointed for that  
purpose under the kepeinge of the Comptrowler & Sercher, till  
hit be shipped in some other shippe in such order as cloth or other  
commodities be used to be shipped<sup>76</sup>

order to be taken  
for wett clothes goinge  
owtwarde being  
dried & shippedd  
ageine

Wheas oftentimes yt chaunceth by foule wether or other misfortune  
clothes or other commodities shipped owtwarde be wett in lighters  
by reyne in shippes by leykes *which* gooddes after of necessitye  
muste be taken upp agein & dried *which* cannot be well done  
but in the *merchantes* houses some goodd order would be  
provided to see the same gooddes weare not chaunged for theare  
ys great deceyt used that waye<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> This section seeks to prevent fraud in the export of cloth, whereby merchants would declare cloth, lade it and dispatch it. The merchant and customs officers would then pretend that part of the consignment had not been dispatched for some reason – a certificate being issued to confirm this. The result would be that the merchant would then be able to export the certificated amount of cloth customs-free on a later voyage.

<sup>77</sup> In other words it is suggested that cloth or other goods that had been taken back to a merchant's house for drying might, on repacking, be substituted for goods that paid higher duties.

Reformation for *merchantes*

the maire & alder  
men of London  
the governor of *merchantes*  
adventurers.

beinge driven to make  
sharpe lawes have  
ordeyned

for certen offences the  
losse of freedome of  
eyther corporacion

123v.

therefore seinge these  
corporacions beinge  
but privat members.

The maire<sup>78</sup> the aldermen & Citizens of London & the governor  
the assistanse & Comminalitie of *merchantes* aventurars<sup>79</sup>  
havinge authoritie from the quenes *majestie* & her moste noble  
progenitors to make penall lawes amongst them selves for  
the punishment of such persons as by no easie or reasonable  
meanes would liffe in order but contemptuously *proceeded*  
from one wickednes to an other & would not be ruled till  
sharper lawes weare provided *which* was to lose their freedome  
& libartie both in London & in Flaunders, the offences to the  
Cittie of London be for coloring<sup>80</sup> of Strangers or foreners  
gooddes for disobeyinge the maire & Aldermen in sundry

sleight causes amongeste the *merchantes* aventurars in [*erasure*]  
breakinge of orders in shippinge gooddes owte [*erasure*] off  
Englande into forbidden places wheare the marte<sup>81</sup> ys not  
kepte & for byinge of wares in townes & places beyonde  
the seas *which* in like maner weare forbidden, for colouringe  
straungers gooddes not Free of that Company, for disceyvinge the  
Company in payment of Impositions & other dewties,  
*with* such like yf any Freeman of London or merchant  
aventurar offend in any of these cases, both themselves,  
their children, & servantes, lose their Freedome & libartie<sup>82</sup>  
for ever, & cleane cut of from both Corporacions as disceyfull  
& nowghtie members not worthie to liffe amongst them nor  
never to be Remitted to their Freedome agein. Therefore  
seeinge the Cytizens of London & the *merchantes* aventurars  
beinge but private Corporacions & by disorder of their cytizens

<sup>78</sup> 'maire': mayor.

<sup>79</sup> 'merchantes aventurars': The Merchant Adventurers of London, who had a monopoly on the export of cloth to the Netherland markets and who, during the late-sixteenth century, dominated England's cloth trade.

<sup>80</sup> 'coloringe': colouring – i.e. the representation of one thing as another: in this case pretending that goods owned by foreigners were owned by English merchants, to reduce the customs dues payable.

<sup>81</sup> 'marte': mart – i.e. the official market to which all cloth exported from England to the Netherlands were meant to be taken. At this time the mart was normally at Antwerp.

<sup>82</sup> 'Freedome & libartie': freedom and liberty – i.e. their status as freemen of the City of London or members of the Merchant Adventurers.



ordeine & execute  
such sharpe lawes  
for small offences  
towards them selves

then such persons as  
deceive her *majestie* of  
such *rightes* & *dewties*  
as be geven her  
highnes

by acte of parliament  
beinge of greater  
force then their  
Lawes ought to be  
punished by the like  
Lawes.

124r.

The like order to be  
used all Englande  
throwghe.

the punshinge of one  
or ij wilbe an example

have bene forced to ordeine & execute such sharpe lawes  
amongest them selves uppon their brother & fellowe  
Cytizens that do offende in thiese private thinges [*erasure*]  
apparteyninge & touchinge them selves, & that yt ys they  
& *merchantes* & *sytizens*<sup>83</sup> of the Cyttye by whom her  
*majestie* ys deceyved of such *Rightes* & *dewties* as by acte  
of Parliament being of greater autorite then  
their private lawes, ys geven to her highnes for the  
maytenaunce of the Corone<sup>84</sup> & state of this Realme wherof  
themselves be members & will nether regarde Lawe  
Dewtie Conscience nor Honestie, yt weare great reson

And there owght the like or sharper lawes to be provided &  
made & executed uppon them for disseyvinge<sup>85</sup> of her *majestie*  
as for deceyvinge the Cyttye of London or the *merchantes*  
*aventurars*<sup>86</sup> / As if any merchant whatsoever beinge Englishe  
or any shippars wharffenger keykeper Lighterman or any  
other person beinge a Cytizen & Freeman of London & proved  
to have offended in the premisses to forfeit the gooddes uncustomed  
to the Quenes *majestie* accordinge to the order by Parliament  
& to be called before the maire of London & the Aldermen of  
the same or before the *governor* of the *merchantes* *aventurars* &  
uppon suche dewe prouffe to be made they to call a Courte  
as they use for them selves in suche cases & there to disfranches<sup>87</sup>  
the offenders their children & *servantes* for ever as nowghty  
& disceytfull subiectes never to be remitted to their freedome  
ageine of neyther Corporacion *withowt* the Speciall licence or  
Commaundement from the Quenes *majestie* or her honorable  
Counsell: my lorde one or ij beinge thus punished *with*

<sup>83</sup> 'sytizens': citizens.

<sup>84</sup> 'Corone': Crown.

<sup>85</sup> 'disseyvinge': deceiving.

<sup>86</sup> It is thus suggested that since Acts of Parliament have greater authority than the internal rules of a corporate body, those who evade the Crown's duties should be dealt with at least as severely as those who break the ordinances of bodies such as the Merchant Venturers.

<sup>87</sup> 'disfranches': disenfranchise.

to ~~an~~ a number

Losse of their Freedome being cleane Cut from occupieng  
 & from the fellowshipe of their Friendes & acquayntaunce  
 & be made as hit weare a mockinge stocke<sup>88</sup> & pointed at *with*  
 Fingers the shame therof will put such feare in men  
 that the dare not attempt such disceytes as they now doe  
 for lacke of such severe punishment<sup>89</sup>  
 The same order to be taken both in Saint Katherens  
 Southwarke<sup>90</sup> and all Englande throwghe where any

124v.

marchandisses be used in townes Corporate<sup>91</sup> or any other  
 places where no Freedome or libartie ys to be loste  
 to be forbidden never to use the trade of *merchandises*  
 ageine

For *merchantes* straungers

A punishment for  
 merchant straungers  
 that deceive the quene  
 in payenge of  
 custome.

Yf any *merchantes* strangers inhabitinge or usinge the trade  
 of merchandise in any place *within* this Realme beinge  
 Denizen<sup>92</sup> or other that ys proved *with* any of the Faultes  
 afforesaid shall forfait the gooddes so uncustomed and be  
 be commaunded to departe the Realme *within* a certen tyme  
 & beinge a denizen to lose his gooddes so uncustomed and  
 Denizenshipp also & be in like maner commaunded to departe  
 this Realme as the other straungers as disceytfull  
 & Craftie persons & not to returne agein *without* the  
 speciall licence of the Quenes *majestie* as [*erasure*] afforsaid

For shippars

Theare was by acte of Parliament holden the firste  
 yeare of the Quenes *majesties* Reigne certen lawes provided<sup>93</sup> both  
 For *merchantes* Shippars key keepers whaffengers & other

<sup>88</sup> 'mockinge stocke': mocking-stock – i.e. a laughing-stock.

<sup>89</sup> In practice, the penalty for evading duties was rarely more than the forfeiture of goods seized.

<sup>90</sup> St Katherine's Dock, Southwark, London.

<sup>91</sup> 'townes Corporate' – i.e. a town possessing municipal rights and acting by means of a corporation.

<sup>92</sup> 'Denizen' – in this sense resident aliens, who possessed rights not normally granted to foreigners.

<sup>93</sup> 'An Acte limiting the tymes for laying on Lande Marchandise from beyonde the Seas, and touching Customes for Sweete Wynes,' *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 4, pp. 372-4.

watermen *which* lawes if they weare well loked to and  
executed would serve to reforme the shyppars but for the  
*merchantes* keykeepers wharffengers & watermen will by  
no meanes so well be reformed as by the losse of their  
Freedome, For by the weedinge owte of the nowghtie

125r.

and disceytfull membars the honest *merchantes* that pay  
their dewties Justlie shall not be hindered as they now  
be And dowltes<sup>94</sup> if your honor thinke this punishment  
meete to be used, yt will easelly & willingly graunted,  
by reason yt ys beneficiall to all honest and trewe  
Dealinge men /

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<sup>94</sup> 'dowltes': doubtless.